

Groundwater Guardian Annual Designation

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Alabama Groundwater Guardian Newsletter

Alabama Department of Environmental Management
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Groundwater Guardian Annual Designation

The Annual Groundwater Foundation Conference and Groundwater Guardian Designation was held November 17 - 20, 2002 in Eugene, Oregon. The theme for the conference was Groundwater: The Forgotten Element of Watershed Protection. Approximately 200 people from throughout the United States attended the conference. The topics ranged from Youth Protecting Groundwater, to Groundwater /Surface Water Quality and Protection Models.

A total of 150 communities and 34 organizations were recognized at the Groundwater Guardian Designation ceremony on Tuesday night. Six communities and two organizations in Alabama were designated this year. The communities are Eufaula, Limestone County, Madison County, City of Madison, Rehobeth, and Tuscumbia. The organizations recognized were the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. It was a wonderful evening of recognition for the communities' efforts to protect groundwater. One of the most inspirational talks given at the ceremony was by James Beaumont from the Orange County Groundwater Guardian Team. His talk focused on promoting the Groundwater Guardian Program. It went as follows:

"The Hanford Reservation is northeast of here in central Washington State. The government produced plutonium for nuclear weapons there. In 1986 a scientist was involved in plans for the long-term storage of radioactive wastes. He spent the morning with other scientists discussing how to mark a waste site so that even in the distant future, people would not accidentally drill for water there or otherwise bring about harmful releases. During the break, he saw several members of the Yakima

over their descendant's safety. "Do not worry," they assured him. "We will tell them where it is." The Yakima's concept of themselves and their place is not historical, as ours is, it is eternal. This would always be their land their place. They would warn others not to mess with the wastes that we have left.

Yesterday, during the conference, Kim Stokely spoke about place-based learning. Rev. Fowler has been spreading the gospel (message) to her parishioners of clean drinking water and indoor plumbing. Prof. Williams said, "do a little thing everyday". And Mr. Anthony said, "we need to reach out beyond our people and broaden our approach."



Here is our challenge:

- * Let us become the Groundwater Guardian Nation.
- * Let us change our conception from historical to eternal.
- * Let us teach our children how not to mess with the wastes we have made; and how to refrain from making new wastes.
- * Let us spread the gospel: of clean drinking water; indoor plumbing; watershed stewardship; wellhead protection; water conservation; sustainability.
- * Let us reach out beyond our own people and broaden our approach.
- * Let us put all of this together and do one little thing between now and Valentines' Day.
- * Let each one of us help one more community join the Groundwater Guardian Nation.

That is our challenge:

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GW Guardians and Date of Initiation

- * Madison County 1997
- * City of Madison 1998
- * City of Tuscumbia 1998
- * Limestone County 1999
- * City of Eufaula 2001

GW Guardian Affiliates

- * Alabama Department of Environmental Management 1997
- * Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries 1998

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Community Spotlight

Limestone County

The rural areas of Limestone County are experiencing contamination due to run-off from large agricultural operations. Rapid growth in these areas has also put stress on the water system, prompting the installation of an additional supply well that will be operational in 2002. Limestone County uses Groundwater Guardian to advise the public about the importance of groundwater protection and sharing ways to prevent groundwater contamination. The primary result oriented activity for the Limestone County Groundwater Guardian team is the Annual Limestone County Groundwater Festival. In 2002 over 750 4th grade students and their teachers from throughout the county participated in the event. Other organizations that participate in planning and implementing the festival are the Limestone County Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the school boards.



Limestone County receiving Recognition at 2002 Groundwater Conference

A Clear Set of Roles Provides a Natural Framework to Create Order and Balance.

Alabama Water Environment Association Groundwater Festival Fun

The Groundwater Festival Program gathers 4th grade Alabama students by county to a central location for an exciting day of activities and entertainment to instill in them a sense of environmental stewardship and awareness.

The concept of a Groundwater Festival program for Alabama began in 1997 at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Since that time, interest in this event has grown and many festivals have been planned and implemented. Currently, 15 Alabama Counties are involved and nearly 30,000 students have attended a Groundwater Festival. Interest in the Groundwater Festival continues to grow and requests have been made throughout the State for assistance in starting new festivals.

The process of hosting a festival involves months of preparation by local volunteers as well as locating long-term sponsors within the community to sustain the festival year after year. Many counties have difficulty raising the funds necessary to successfully implement the festival. In support of this important and far-reaching program, the Alabama Water Environment Association (AWEA) has created the AWEA Groundwater Festival Fund to provide a grant source for the Groundwater Festival Committees. The Alabama Water Environment Association, is a non-profit organization under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(3)(c). These grants will subsidize the fund raising efforts of the Committees.

The AWEA Groundwater Festival Committee is currently soliciting sponsors. Sponsors, to date, include the Alabama Department of Agriculture, the Alabama Department of Environmental management, the Rural Water Association as well as AWEA. Applications for the grant will be available early in January 2003. For more information or to receive an application please contact Enid Probst at 334-271-7953.

US Geological Survey - National Co-Sponsor of Groundwater Guardian

The US Geological Survey (USGS) has entered into a partnership with the Groundwater Foundation and become a co-sponsor of the Groundwater Guardian Program nationwide. The two organizations have compatible missions such as public education, outreach and service as well as provide consistent, credible groundwater information and science. The Groundwater Foundation bases reports, products, and programs on USGS data and information. In addition, the USGS is involved in youth programs such as the Groundwater University (GU), the GU Workshop and the GU Training Manual. The USGS also has a history of successful collaboration with local Groundwater Guardian teams. They serve as a scientific resource as well as a partner for local activities. Activities include National Monitoring Day or Local Designation Celebrations. The USGS offers a wide variety of services from their district Offices. Several of the services include classroom visits, presenters at local event such as festivals and designation ceremonies, as well as monitoring services for local governments and citizen education.

The USGS has a vast collection of resources that are available on-line. By logging onto the website water.usgs.gov, you have access to data, publications, program descriptions, local contacts and information as well as other areas of USGS expertise. One of the nicest aspects of the website is the "Science in Your Watershed" site. All of the information is organized by watershed. It documents projects, publications, databases, as well as case studies. For more information contact the local USGS office at 334-213-2332.

Develop Your Imagination

You can use it to create in your mind what you hope to create in your life.

Result-Oriented Activity Inspiration

A Result-Oriented Activity (ROA) is an education and/or protection activity that focuses on results and making an impact. Each Groundwater Guardian Team investigates the groundwater protection needs of its community. The Team then makes plans to take action by developing at least one ROA annually.

If your team is searching for an ROA, or if you would like to add to your activities, consider hosting a Customer Appreciation Day. Invite senior citizens, a local school, the City Council and County Commissioners to an event of displays, door prizes and presentations. An example of a Groundwater Guardian Team that has implemented this activity is the City of Eufaula. The Eufaula Wellhead Protection Committee coordinates a Customer Appreciation Day during National Drinking Water Awareness Week. The committee invites the City Horticulture Department, the Sewer Department, Fire Department, Emergency Management, Alabama Power, ARWA, and the City Recycling Department to set up demonstration booths. In addition, the Water Department has a booth that features water conservation brochures, Dangers in the Meter Box, How to read the meter, how to calculate the number of gallons used in a household as well as have real-time demonstrations of the Telemetry system and a sewer camera. Hotdogs, pizza and cokes are served and lots of information provided to the participants. The committee invites a local school and a senior citizen center as well as advertisers in the Eufaula Tribune. The event is very well attended; last year 240 people participated.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

January 22-23, 2003
On-site Sewage Treatment and Disposal Conference
Auburn, University Hotel
1-800-446-0382

February 4-5, 2003
Nonpoint Source Watershed Forum
Birmingham Marriott Hotel
1-334-394-4360

February 19-21, 2003
Legacy Conference
Marriott Grand Hotel, Point Clear
334-270-5921

March 3-4, 2003
Alabama Rural Water Association Annual Conference
Montgomery, Civic Center
334-396-5511

Groundwater Festivals
Contact 334-271-7953

March 7 - Limestone County
March 19 - Colbert County
March 24 - Barbour County
April 24 - Geneva County
April 25 - Cullman County
April 30 - Pike County